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THE
TRAGEDY OF MOHARRUM.

By

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Peer Sahab's Ghishtiya Gaddi,

MANGROL. (Near Surat).



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Foreword.

**Father of light and life thou God Supreme
Oh, teach me what is good; teach me thyself!**

—Thomson.

The name of Moharrum is familiar to every ear. It is the sacred season of the deepest grief and of true self-denial and is held in revered commemoration of the Imam Hussain the grandson of the Prophet, who fell a victim to the cruelty of his enemies on the fatal field of Kerbala.

The aim of the following pages is to give a brief account of Moharrum as transmitted to us by traditional chronicles. In undertaking to sketch an idea of the meaning of this season of great grief, I am by no means insensible to the difficulties of the task on which I enter. The subject is intricate and entails much controversy, however, at the instance of friends anxious for the propagation of the knowledge of Moharrum, I venture to place this little book before the public with the hope that it may tend to remove incorrect ideas on

the most tragic event in the history of Islam, and help to draw their sympathy to it.

I am only too conscious of the faults and oversights in the book much of which has been written in hours of scanty leisure. That its imperfections are not greater than they are, I owe to the kindness of Nawabzadah Abdul Karim Khan Saheb M. A. (Oxon). Barrister-at-Law who has very kindly helped me to revise the manuscript, at the sacrifice of his most valuable time.

Pir Saheb's Khanqah.

11 th March 1918

MANGROL.

(Near Surat).

M. K. Peerzadah.

Sajjadah Nashin,



THE TRAGEDY OF MOHARRUM.

CHAPTER I

God sent His singers upon Earth
With songs of sadness and of mirth,
That they might teach the hearts of men
And bring them back to Heaven again.

—Longfellow.

In 680 A. D. on the death of Amir Muawiyah,* Yazid his son ascended the Gadi. He had himself installed at Damascus in the month of Shaban in the sixty first year of the Hijirah. Born in the twenty sixth year of the Hijirah, he was five and thirty years of age, when he succeeded his father. Finding himself in power he confirmed all his father's officers in their several appointments. Valid-bin-Ottibah as Governor

* After the four great Caliphs of the Prophet Muhammed, Amir Muawiyah became the head of Mosleme power and held the supremacy till his death. He was the Prophet's brother in law.

of Madina; Noaman-bin-Bashir of Kufa; Obaidullah-bin-Ziyad of Bussorah and Abdullah Omar of Mecca. But as they despised him "for his vices and held his character in the greatest abhorrence, the cities of Mecca and Medina and certain other cities of Babylonia refused to place themselves under his sway, though Syria, Persia and other adjacent countries duly acknowledged him as their head. Although looking forward to an undisputed possession of the Khilafat,* he was not, however, without great misgivings of opposition from Imam Hussain,† the second son of Ali, and Abdullah the son of Zubair.‡ In order to make his way clear he wrote the following letter to Valid the Governor of Madina.

* Pontifical throne.

† Imam Hussain was the second son of Hazrat Ali the cousin and 4th Caliph and Bibi Fatimah, the illustrious daughter of Muhammed the Prophet. Imam means the leader of the faithful.

‡ Abdullah bin Zubair bin Awwam bin Khoweylid bin Assad bin Abdul Uzza bin Kossay one of the great grand fathers of the Prophet. He was thus related to the Prophet.

“In the name of the most merciful God-from Yazid, emperor of the faithful, to Valid the son of Ottibah. Muawiyah was one of the servants of God, who made him Caliph, extended his dominions, and strengthened his arm. He lived his appointed time and was drawn to his mercy. He lived beloved and died pure and innocent. Farewell; Capture and hold Hussain and Abdullah the son of Zubair without compunction or delay.”

Receiving this letter, Valid who was of an undecided character, called in Merwan,[†] son of Hakam, and consulted him on the subject. Merwan one of the most crafty men of the age, advised the Governor to immediately summon Hussain and Abdullah, lest they should hear of Muawiyah's death and devise measures of opposition to Yazid and while they were in his presence to demand from them the oath of fealty to Yazid, and should they refuse, to behead them without further question. Valid's messenger found at the mosque

* Merwan bin Hakam bin Abdul Aas bin Ummaiya bin Abdus Shams bin Abd Manaf bin Kossay.

Hussain and Abdullah, who sent him back, with the answer that they could follow him into the presence of the Governor. Hussain accordingly went to the Governor's house but suspecting some plot he went with a retinue of friends and domestics, whom he stationed near the doorway with instructions to rush in, should they hear the least sound of a disturbance. The Governor on meeting Hussain gave him the sad news of the death of Muawiyah and invited him to swear allegiance to Yazid his successor. Hussain much surprised, replied, "Men of your station and rank must not deviate from the usual customs and observances as to suggest such matters, in private, least of all to ask it of me. Follow the usual customs on such occasions, let all the people assemble and accept him whom they unanimously choose for the Khilafat." Valid consented but the crafty Merwan interposed saying to the Governor, "There will be much bloodshed between you and him if you allow Hussain to depart without oath of allegiance to Yazid; therefore hold him fast and enforce it of him in

your presence. Hussain, however, first reproaching Merwan for his ill-timed advice, withdrew and went straight home. The disappointed and blood-thirsty Merwan assured the Governor on oath of improbability of an occasion ever arising so opportune as the present; but Valid with that ray of light which a merciful Providence ever presents to the mind's eye of those who seek it, said that it was of no consequence to him, as he had every thing he desired in this world and that in the next he could not honestly believe it possible for the man to find salvation who had the blood of Hussain on his hands.

Hussain and Abdullah now discovering in time the plot against them departed to Mecca. Yazid enraged at Valid's leniency towards Hussain in spite of his express orders to arrest Hussain if necessary removed him from the Government of Madina and replaced him by Amru the son of Said, Governor of Mecca. Taking advantage of the mortal hatred which Amer the son of Zubair bore

against his brother Abdullah, Yazid ordered him to wage war against the latter. Abdullah engaged Amer in the field, utterly routed him and taking him captive imprisoned him for life. Now though Abdullah's fame had spread throughout the country on his crushing all opposition to him, yet Hussain's glory so far out-shown his own that the former had no chance of gaining support of the people. Hussain both on account of his near relationship to the Prophet and his personal qualifications was revered above all men. He had served with honour in the siege of Constantinople. He was not only free from that taint of low cunning and intrigue which characterised his opponents but inherited all his father's virtues and chivalrous nature. Hussain received repeated messages from his partisans in Kufa,* inviting him to their city and assuring him that if he would but show himself there he would not

* Kufa was the Capital of Hazarat Ali, having more than ten lacs of population then.

only be sure of his own life, but in consideration of the esteem in which they held his family they would render him their loyal homage and would acknowledge him as the only lawful and true Caliph. They assured him that the whole country being entirely devoted to him and ready to risk their lives and fortune in his cause would rise in arms to support him. But Hussain's friends tried to dissuade him from placing his trust in such promises. They well knew the character of the men who made such offers. "Eager, fierce and impetuous, the people of Kufa were utterly wanting in perseverance and steadiness.*" They knew not their own minds from day to day. One moment ardent as fire for some cause or person, the next they were as cold as ice and as indifferent as the dead. The messengers they had sent repeatedly now came to him atlast in a body and begged him in great earnest to start for Kufa. He therefore felt it his duty to respond to their appeal. He sent his cousin

* Syed Amir Ali's History of the Saracens.

Muslim-bin-Okail to Kufa to sound the people and ascertain the truth of their statements with instructions to try and crush all possible opposition, should circumstances prove favourable.




CHAPTER II.

The world is full of noble task
of wreaths hard won.

Each work demands strong hearts,
strong hands,

Till day is done.

—Aubrey de Vere.

uitting Mecca, Muslim passed through Madina where he procured a couple of guides who led him into a vast desert where one of them perished with thirst, and soon after the other died of an acute malady. This disastrous beginning seemed so ominous to Muslim and gave him so much anxiety that when he had reached a spot in which there was no water he halted and dispatched a messenger to Hussain for further instructions. Hussain ordered him to proceed to Kufa and act according to the instructions already received. Thereupon Muslim almost unattended and beset on all sides with great peril and enduring hardships crossed the desert of Irak.* On arriving at Kufa he was welcomed by Hussain's

* Irak-Babylonia.

party. Communicating his errand privately to those he could trust, he was assured that eighteen thousand men were ready to sacrifice their blood and treasure in upholding the cause of the Noble Imam. Every day the number of apparent enthusiasts for the cause increased until it amounted to a hundred and forty thousand. Of all this promise of support and consequent hope of success, Muslim sent repeated accounts to Hussain urging him to come and assuring him that the preparations had been carried out with such care and vigilance that Noaman the Governor of Kufa had no knowledge of them and that now nothing further was wanting save his presence. The assurance that all Irak was ready to rise in arms in his favour the moment he should appear on the scene, decided Hussain to start for Kufa. Though the existence of this plot had escaped the notice of Noaman news of it was abroad and reached the ears of Yazid at Damacus who sent instant orders to Obaidullah-bin-Ziyad, Governor of Bussorah to immediately hasten to Kufa, remove its in-

dolent Governor and take over the reins of Government.

Obaidullah aware that the moment was critical set out from Bussorah for Kufa with about a score of horsemen. As he rode into the city in the evening at the head of his troops, the people of Kufa, mistaking him for the noble Imam Hussain whose arrival they were expecting every moment saluted him as he passed along. The populace crowded round him greeting the supposed grandson* of the Prophet. But to their dire mortification they were soon undeceived when some of Obaidullah's horsemen driving them off fiercely ordered them to stand aside and make room for the Amir Obaidullah. The crowd thereupon shrank back abashed and disappointed and the Amir rode directly to the castle and began to plan proper means for stamping out sedition. The popular commotion reached a climax when it was known that the Amir had taken over command of the province. However the authority

* Imam Hussain was the son of Fatimah the beloved daughter of Mohammed the Prophet.

which he could not gain by fair play he initiated and maintained by underhand means. He gave three thousand pieces to one of his servants who was to pretend that he had come from Syria, to support the claim of Hussain. The servant mingled with Hussain's partisans, under this pretence, till he had made himself well acquainted with all their plans and circumstances and then made his report to Obaidullah. Now Muslim's followers seeing that their position was getting critical began to desert one by one, till he having no more than thirty men left with him, tried to retire to a place of safety. Taking advantage of the twilight he left Kufa without so much as a guide to lead him or any one to comfort him or give him shelter. Night fell and he was left alone in the dark, not knowing where to go. At last he came to a solitary house in a field and gently knocked at the door. He was answered by an old woman, whom he asked for some water, which she gave him, but seeing that he was reluctant to move she asked him who he was. He told her that his name was Muslim, and that

the people of country had played him false. No sooner did she hear his name, than she took him in and led him into the most secret corner of her house. But her son who was then out on coming home felt suspicious when he saw his mother moving nervously to and fro in the house. His curiosity being aroused he became so inquisitive that he would not rest satisfied till he was informed of the whole affair. His mother implored him to keep it secret, but he having heard that Obaidullah had promised a reward to any one who should give information of Muslim's whereabouts, went and informed him in the morning. Whereupon before Muslim had time to take measures for his safety, he found himself surrounded by four score horse. They attacked and pelted him with stones, and flung lighted torches at him. He at last went out and withstood them in the open, beat off the assault three times with great intrepidity. But being atlength overpowered and grievously wounded in several places, he was seized and disarmed. He shed bitter tears on his capture, not on his own

account but on account of Imam Hussain fearing that the letters and representations inducing the Imam to come to Kufa had brought about disaster. Then turning to a man near him he begged him to send a messenger to Imam Hussain privately and entreat him to stop advancing. The man granted his request but the messenger failed to deliver his message.



CHAPTER III.

God's own hand

Holds fast all issues of our deeds; with him

The end of all our ends is.

—Swinburne.

When Muslim was brought to the Castle he begged for a drink of water, but was refused it. He was dragged to the top of the Castle, condemned as a traitor and beheaded. First his head and then his body were cast to the bottom. The head was sent to Yazid as a present, who now thought that half the battle was won. This was on the 8th day of the month of Zul-Haj* in the sixty first year of the Hijra.

Muslim's letters had indeed produced the dreaded effect. On receiving them Hussain prepared to comply with the earnest entreaties of the people of Kufa. In vain his friends reminded him of the proverbial faithlessness of these people. In vain they urged him to wait until

* Last month of the Musleme year.

they had won the whole of the country by force of arms, and then to come and assume the Government. In vain his relative Abdullah-bin-Abbass urged him to leave atleast the womanfolk of his family at Mecca, lest he should be murdered before their very eyes. Hussain in the true spirit of a Musleme declared he would leave the issue to Allah. Accordingly he set out from Mecca on the very† day on which his cousin Muslim was killed at Kufa from whom he had received no further news than he had already received viz: that all was well. Accompanied by several of his relatives, his two grown up sons, a few devoted followers and a timorous handful of women and children, he crossed the desert of Arabia unmolested, but on reaching the borders of Babylonia* he saw no signs of the Kufa army which had promised to meet him. He was alarmed by the solitary and hostile appearance of the country, and suspected treachery and the ruin of his party.

† Some say the day before.

* Irak.

His fears were justified. Obaidullah the Governor of Kufa had stamped out the first sparks of insurrection, and had sent against the Imam, a body of Horse led by Hurr an Arab of the tribe of Tamim. At first Hussain mistook them for a detachment of his partisans sent out to meet him, but was soon informed by Hurr that he came from Obaidullah to take him and his followers to Kufa. Hussain refused to submit to Obaidullah's orders and said that he came in peace invited by the inhabitants of Kufa as their rightful Caliph. While they were still conversing four horsemen rode up accompanied by a guide. One of them was known to Hussain and was permitted by Hurr to converse apart with him. Hussain inquired into the situation of affairs at Kufa. "The nobles" replied the other, "are now against you to a man, some of the common people are still with you, however by to-morrow every dagger will be drawn against you." Hussain inquired about Kais, a messenger whom he had sent in advance, to inform his partisans of his approach. He was told

that Kais had been seized on suspicion, and as a test of his fealty ordered by Obaidullah to curse Hussain and his father Ali, and on refusing had been thrown headlong from the top of the citadel. Hussain shed tears on hearing the fate of his faithful messenger. "There be some", said he, "who are already dead, and some who living expect death for my cause. Let their mansions, Oh God, be in the gardens of paradise, and draw us with them to Thy mercy and the delights of Thy reward."

One of his followers told him that he did not think the little band was a sufficient match for the hostile horse pitted against his, and that he offered to lead him to an impregnable fortress, where ten thousand men of the tribe of Tay would soon rise to defend him, but Hussain declined this advice and persisted in his resolution, not to flinch from his purpose, and if necessary to give up his life for this noble cause.

Determined, however, to persevere he gave permission to all who pleased to

retire, while there was yet time, and continued his way to Kufa accompanied only by seventy two persons. But at every step his difficulties increased. Hurr and his troop kept pace with him, watching every moment; but offering no molestation. The mind of Hussain however was darkened by gloomy forebodings. A reverie at times fell upon his mind, and showed ghastly figures of evil doom. He slept a while, and startled from his dream, and said "To God we belong, and to Him we must return". In his dream he had seen a horseman who warned him in these words, "Men travel by night, and their destinies travel also by night to meet them." This he knew to be a portent of death.



CHAPTER IV.

Abide with me from morn till eve,
For without Thee I cannot live;
Abide with me when night is nigh,
For without Thee I cannot die.

—I. Keble.



As soon as morning prayers were over, Hussain quickened his pace, and as he rode along there came a person who saluted Hurr, but took no notice of him. He gave a letter to Hurr from Obaidullah containing orders to lead Hussain and his men to a place where there was neither town nor fortification till his messengers and forces should come up.* Thus near the banks of the Euphrates Hussain was brought to a halt by the appearance of four thousand men in hostile array, commanded by Amrubin-Saad. The latter had been sent by the Amir Obaidullah who was full of uneasiness lest there should be some popular movement in favour of Hussain.

* This was on Friday the 2nd day of the month of Moharrum in sixty first year of the Hijira i. e. on the 1st day of October 680 A. D.

The opposing army had pitched their tents outside the walls of Kufa, and when Obaidullah heard of Hussain's arrival, he commanded it to advance against him. Amru begged to be excused, and on Obaidullah threatening him for his refusal to obey orders, he asked for time to consider the matter. All whom he consulted dissuaded him from doing any harm to Hussain, even his nephew, saying "Beware of opposing Imam Hussain and rebelling against your Lord, and of being cut off from His mercy, by God it were better that you should be deprived of the dominions of the whole world, than meet your Lord with the blood of Hussain upon your hands". With these expostulations he seemed to agree, but upon Obaidullah's renewing his threats he marched against Hussain, and meeting him in the above mentioned place set to inquire what had brought the latter there. The repeated appearance of hostile troops, and the lack of any armed forces in his favour, convinced Hussain of the fickleness of the people of Kufa, and he answered that the Kufans had written

to invite him, but since they now rejected him he was willing to return to Mecca. Amru who had advanced against the Noble Descendant of the Prophet. was glad to hear this and despatched a fleet footed messenger to inform the Amir of this favourable offer, hoping to be excused from being ordered to use violence against the Imam. In reply Obaidullah wrote "Get between him and the Euphrates. Cut him off from water. Force him and his companions to acknowledge fealty to Yazid. When they have done that, I will consider further terms." From that time, the hostile force began to hinder Hussain's men from obtaining water, and his little band suffered the pangs of thirst. Still they could not be brought to acknowledge Yazid. Now the name of the place where they intercepted him was Kerbala, a parched desert waste, and on hearing the name Hussain said, "Kerb and Bala" viz. trouble and affliction. For days, their tents were surrounded and as the murderous ruffians dared not come within the reach of Hussain's sword, they caused terrible suffering to the small band of

martyrs. In conference with the chief of the army Hussain proposed the option of three honourable conditions; (1) that he should be allowed to return to Medina, (2) that he might be stationed in a frontier garrison against the Turks, or (3) that he should be safely conducted to the presence of Yazid to settle matters personally.

These terms were likewise communicated by Amru to Obaidullah who seemed at first to look upon them as a reasonable proposal till Shimr* a wretch of fierce spirit stood up, and swore that he ought not to be admitted to terms till he had surrendered, adding that he had been informed of continued negotiations between him and Amru. This remark totally changed Obaidullah's mind. He was resolved not to run the risk of allowing Hussain to come too near Kufa, for fear of an insurrection. He

* Shimr was the brother-in law of Hozrat Ali the father of Hussain and maternal uncle of Abbas the son of Ali. He had white leprosy.

therefore sent Shimr with orders to Amru and wrote to him, "If Hussain and his men surrender, and take the oath of obedience, treat them kindly. If they refuse, fall upon them, slay them, and trample them under the feet of horse." Shimr, besides, had private instructions, "If Amru fail to do as I have ordered, strike off his head, and take command of his forces." Obaidullah also sent a letter to Amru reprimanding him for his tardiness, which he considered, as intended to gain time for tampering with public feeling. Amru on receiving Obaidullah's letter drew up his forces on the evening of the 9th day of the month of Moharrun. He came to the Imam's tent and asked for another interview with him. He found him in front of his tent conversing with his brother Abbas, just after evening prayer, and informed him of the decisive demand of the Amir Obaidullah and its alternative. The commands were stern and absolute, and Hussain was informed that he must either submit as a captive to the Amir or reap the consequences of his rebellion. Upon this, he and his

brother Abbas asked for time till the next morning when they would answer him. This was granted, but Hussain was already resolved. He saw that all hopes of honourable terms were in vain, and he was determined to die. He deemed death preferable to submission. After Amru had left, leaning on his sword, he remained seated alone at the door of his tent, lost in gloomy meditation on the fate of the coming day. A drowsiness came over him with the same kind of portentous dreams that he had already experienced. He slept patiently through the night, using the pommel of his sword as a pillow. In his sleep he dreamt that the Prophet appeared to him, and predicted that they should meet the next day in paradise. At dawn, he was roused by the approach of his sister Zainab, who had accompanied him on this fatal expedition. He lifted up his head and told her his dream. The boding mind of Zainab interpreted portent. Bursting into a flood of tears, she exclaimed, "Alas! Alas! Woe on us and our family! What a terrible destiny is ours! Our father Ali is dead, so too our mother Fatemah.

Our brother Hassan is dead, and the measure of our cup of woe is not yet full." Then, overwhelmed with grief, she fell into a swoon. Hussain raised her tenderly, and trying to console her said, " Oh Sister place your trust in God, and depend upon that which come from Him. Why should you weep? Have we not come on earth to die? Every thing that exists must perish, and return to its Creator. Our father and our mother were far worthier than us, yet they are dead; and every Mosleme has an example in the death of the Prophet. Then, why should you bewail your fate? ". Taking her by the hand, he led her into the tent, imploring her, in case of his death, not to give way to excessive grief. He then strictly enjoined upon his family to make no lamentations, for his approaching martyrdom, telling them that patient submission to Divine Decrees was the conduct most pleasing to God and his Prophet.

He next addressed his friends and followers, " These men by whom we are surrounded ", said he, " want no other life

but mine, and will be fully satisfied with my death. Stay not with me to die. Disperse for your safety, and leave me to my fate ". But Abbas replied, " God forbid that we should live to see the time when we should survive you ", and his words were echoed by the rest. The only matter now left to be considered, was how they could best sell their lives most dearly, and make their deaths a memorable sacrifice. Closing their tents they fortified their little* encampment with a trench and then quietly awaited the issue. This done, the devoted band, conscious that the next day was to be their last, passed the night in prayer, while the horse of the enemy's guard, kept riding round them, all the while, to prevent their escape.



* It is said that, Hassan was poisoned at Yazil's instigation, before the battle of Kerbala.

CHAPTER V.

Life's, but a means unto an end that end.
Beginning, mean, and end of all things-God.

—P. J. Bailey.

When morning dawned, Hazrat Hus-sain washed and purified himself, and on being asked the meaning of this performance, a person standing by replied, "Alas, there is nought between us and Paradise, saving the short interval, till this people fall upon us, and kill us". His whole force numbered only 40 foot, and two and thirty horse, but all were fired with the spirit of martyrdom. Their flank and rear were secured by the tent ropes, and by a deep trench, which they had filled with lighted faggots, according to the practice of the Arabs. Then Hus-sain mounted his steed, and coming up to the people, invited them to perform their duty, adding, "Oh God, be Thou my refuge in suffering, and my hope in affliction". He, then, cride out, "Harken to the advice I am about to give you", at which they all listened in silence. Then, having first praised God, he said, "Oh men, if my posi-

tion and my admonitions with the signs of God weigh heavy on you, I have trust in God, therefore, let you and your associates combine in action, let your action cause no perplexity to you, do all that you wish unto me, and give me no respite. But if you turn back, you do me no harm, for I have asked no reward of you, my reward is but due from God, and I am commanded to be one of those who are resigned unto Him. My Protector is God, Who sent down the Book (i. e. the Koran), and He will be the Protector of the righteous.”*

As soon as he had uttered these last words, his sisters and daughters lifted up their voices, in loud weeping. Their heart-rending lamentations, shook the steadfastness of his soul, and the idea of the exposed and desolate state, in which his death would leave them, came as a thunderbolt upon him. He recalled the advice of Abdullah-ibn-Abbas, to leave the women in safety in Mecca. “God will reward thee Abdullah-ibn-Abbas”, exclaimed he, in the fullness of his feelings.

* The Koran.

Then, he sent his brother Abbas and his son Ali, to comfort them. He next reminded his faithful retinue of his merits, the nobility of his birth, the greatness of his power, and his high descent, and said, "Judge for yourselves, whether or not, such a man as I, is not better for you. I am the grands—on of your Prophet, besides whom, there is no other upon the face of the earth, and the Apostle of God, upon whom be peace, said of both of me and my brother, that we were the Chiefs of the youth of Paradise. Believe what I say is true, for by God, I have never told a lie, for verily God hates a lie. If you do not believe me, ask the companions of the Prophet, (here he named them,) and they will tell you as to its truth. Let me go back to my people, and my home." When asked, what hindered him from being ruled by the rest of his relations, he answered, "God forbid that I should relinquish my right in a slavish manner. I have an appeal to God, against every tyrant, who does not believe in the day of judgment."

A party of thirty horse, headed by Hurr, now wheeled and came to Hussain as friends and allies. Hurr came to show his repentance, and to volunteer his service in the cause of Hussain, declaring that had he ever thought, that matters would reach such a pitch, he would never have checked him, but would have at once accompanied him, stright to Yazid. However, he had now come to make amends for his mistake, and to atone for his past conduct, by fighting and dying in his cause. Hussain accepted his repentance, whereupon, Hurr stepped forward, and addressed the hostile troops, as they approached, "Woe on you, men of Kufa; Will you nct accept any of the three conditions, offered you by the grand-son of the Prophet?" Amru replied that, did it lie in his power, he would, undoubtedly, do so, but that Obaidullah was against it, and had strongly reprimanded and reproached the Kufans, for even lending their ears to such suggestions. Then, said Hurr, "Woe on you; for you invite the descendant of the Prophet to your City, only to betray him, and to fight against

him. You shut him and his family off from the waters of the Euphrates, which are accessible even to infidels and beasts, and ensnare him like a lion." Then, ordered the slave, to whom he had given the flag, to advance the colours. As soon as the colour-bearer reached the head of the troops, the fierce Shimr shot an arrow into the camp of Hussain, saying, "Bear witness to the fact that I did strike the first blow". A skirmish then ensued, but the little band of the noble Imam kept within their camp, where they could only be reached by the archers. Two of Amru's men now stepped forward, and offered to fight in single combat. Abdullah, one of the Hussain's party, first asking leave of his Master, entered the lists, and killed them both, though he had to lose every finger of his left hand. Another man now volunteered his service against Hussain. Coming up to him, he said, "Hussain, you are on the verge of Hell". Where upon, Hussain replied, "Far from it, I come to the merciful Lord at His command, but you, alas! are certain to fall into the infernal regions". Thereupon, as the man

wheeled round, his horse bolted, and threw him. His left foot, however, being caught in the stirrup, he was dragged all the way, his head striking against the stone, till he died. From time to time, single combats were fought, as was the custom among the Arabs, in which Hussain's men proved superior, since they fought with the desperation of men resolved to die. This impelled some of the leading persons to advise Amru not to expose his men to the risk of single combat any more. Then Amru the son of Hajjaj, who commanded the right wing, pressed his soldiers forward with blows, exclaiming, "Fall upon those who forsake the true religion, and abandon the Council of the 'Faithful'". "Alas", replied Hussain, "why do you set your men on us? T'is you who forsake the true religion, you who sever yourselves from the assembly of the faithful. Verily, when your souls shall depart from your bodies, you will learn but too late, which party has incurred the penalty of the eternal damnation." Then Shimr pressed his men on, with such violence that they almost penetrated the spot, where Hussain was pos-

ted; but the latter's horse admirably repulsed them. This made them send for some archers from Amru, who ordered some five hundred to advance. As soon as they came up, they poured in their arrows from a distance, and soon unhorsed Hussain's little troop of cavalry. Hurr having his horse shot under him, leaped off, sword in hand, and fought with the desperation of a lion at bay.

Amru, seeing that he could not make any progress against the enemy, made a general assault, but the camp being open only in front, was successfully defended. The enraged Shimr commanded his men to pull down the tents; but was met with rigorous resistance. Thrusting the lance through Hussain's tent he ordered his men to fire with all those who were in it. The women shrieked and ran out. "What", said the Imam, "wouldst thou destroy my family as well? May God destroy thee in the fire of Hell". One of the leading men now coming to Shimr, told him how scandalous and shameful it was to scare defenceless women, but the relentless men knew neither mercy nor shame.

At noon Hussain asked for a suspension of hostilities, till he should have finished his noonday prayer. This trifling request was granted with great difficulty. Yazid's generals asked, how a wretch like him could venture to address God; and added the vilest reproaches to which Hussain made no reply. But one of the men there present said, "Alas for you. Shall your prayers be heard and not those of the Prophet's family upon whom be peace"? Then Hussain said the noonday prayer with the brave survivors of his shattered band, and concluded the service with the prayer of fear, which is only used in times of dire distress. During the fighting he said several prayers, in one of which there were those touching words, "Let not the dew of haeven fall upon them; and withhold from them the blessings of the earth for they have invited me merely to deceive me."



CHAPTER VI.

O teach me in the trying hour
When anguish swells the dewy tear,
To still my sorrows, own Thy Power,
Thy Goodness love, Thy justice fear.

—Thomas Chatterton.

When prayers were over, the enemy renewed the onslaught; but chiefly with arrows from a distance. When they found that they could make little headway in this way they rushed upon the little band with great impetus. "Ali Akbar" says Major Price, "the eldest son of Hus-sain aspired to the distinction of being the first of his family, to lay down his life in defence of his parent. Having announced aloud his name and descent, he rushed into the thickest of the enemy, and animated by the presence of his father, he made ten different assaults, in each of which he killed 2 or 3 of his opponents. At last, almost suffocated with heat and thirst, he complained bitterly of his sufferings. His agonised father arose and placing his own tongue between the parched lips

of his favourite child, thus endeavoured to alleviate his sufferings, by the only means, of which his enemies had not yet been able to deprive him. The Gallant Youth then rushed for the last time into the conflict, but being wounded fell, and was cut to pieces in his father's sight. This over-whelming spectacle wrung from Hussain his first and only cry, whilst his sister Zainab threw herself on the mangled remains of her nephew, and gave vent to the most violent expressions of desepair and sorrow."

The faithful followers of Hussain were picked off one by one, until he found himself almost alone. One of his sons, six of his brethren, and several of his nephews, lay dead around him; the rest of his followers were either killed or mortally wounded. Hitherto he had not received a single scratch, for no one had dared to raise a hand against the grandson of the Prophet, till at length a soldier, more ruthless than the rest, dealt him a severe blow on the head. Wounded and weary, he dragged himself to the river, for a last

drink, but was driven off by a shower of arrows. Faint with loss of blood, he staggered to the door of his tent, and with a burst of paternal affection, which at such a moment must have been mingled with unspeakable bitterness, took his little son Ali Asgar into his laps and began to fondle him. Whilst the boy was lisping out an enquiry as to the reason of his father's emotion, he was struck dead by a distant arrow, in Hussain's arms. The blood of the innocent child flowing into his lap renewed his distress. Taking the blood of the child into the hollow of his hand, he threw it upwards to heaven, saying, "Oh Lord, if Thou withholdest Thy help from us, at least give it to those untainted by sin, and for this innocent blood turn Thy worth upon the heads of the guilty".

At last, he grew extremely thirsty, and as he was drinking, he was shot in the mouth by an arrow. Prevented from quenching his thirst, he instantly rose, withdrew to the entrance of the tent, and there took his last stand, his mouth all the while streaming with blood. Raising his hands

stained with blood towards heaven, he uttered a prayer both for the living and for the dead. Shimr now encouraged some of the stoutest of his men to surround him. Just then Hussain's little nephew, a beautiful child, came to embrace him for the last time, and he too was wounded in his Uncle's arms. "God will receive thee my child", said the noble Imam, "thy reward is with Him and thou wilt soon be with thy pious Forefathers in Paradise". Being then surrounded, he hurled himself on his foes, and in whatever direction he turned, they fled like deer before a lion. His sister Zainab, in depths of despair, came out of the tent, and said, "May the Heavens fall upon the earth", then turning to the general of the Kufans she beseeched him not to allow Hussain to be butchered before her very eyes. Her words were so pathetic that tears trickled down his beard and the boldest of his soldiers fell back on every side, till the savage Shimr with reproaches and curses set on his men again. "His adversaries" says Major Price, "now closed around the person of the

devoted Imam, who, notwithstanding, continued to defend himself with such admirable intrepidity and presence of mind, as to excite the surprise and terror of his assailants, and killed or disabled not a few of their number. Labouring under such extreme anguish of mind from the frightful spectacle of a murdered family, covered with wounds, deprived with water for so many days, and assailed by such multitudinous odds, as well as by distress and horror, in every shape and form, he exhibited such an example of courage and constancy as seemed to be beyond the scope of human prowess. Wounded in four and thirty places by different weapons, extremely weakened through loss of blood, and fainting with intolerable heat and thirst, he still, opposed an invincible resistance to the assaults, which were directed against his person from every side. Reduced to his extremity he was at last approached by seven of the enemy, one of whom drawing near to assail him found a fatal opportunity and struck off one of his arms close to the shoulder. He

now fell, but by a kind of convulsive effort he sprang once more to his feet, and endeavoured to make at the assailant". He was faint with loss of blood and the furious mob rushed upon the dying hero. A massacre rather than a fight ensued. Sinking to the earth he fell beneath a thousand weapons. Thirty wounds were counted on his body and four and thirty bruises. His head was cut off and sent to Obaidullah. They then rode backwards and forwards over the body until it was trampled into the earth, and savage ferocity subjected it to every ignominy.* Several of the barbarous conquerors drove the helpless women out, and proceeded to pillage the tents.

Not one of Hussain's followers survived the massacre. Eighty eight of the enemy were killed and a great number wounded. All the belongings of Hussain and his family were taken as spoils.

"Thus fell" says Syed Amir Ali, "one of the noblest spirits of the age, and with

* The Iman was 55 years, 5 months and 5 days old when he fell on the fatal field.

him perished :all the male members of his family—old and young—with the solitary exception of a sickly child whom Hussain's sister Zainab (Zenobia) saved from the general massacre. He, too, bore the name of Ali, and in after life received the designation of Zainul Aabedin, "the ornament of the Pious". He was the son of Hussain by the daughter of Yazdjard,* the last Sassanide king of Persia, and through him was carried on the house of the noble Imam".




* Sheher Banoo. (Syed Amir Ali's Short History of the Saracens of the year 1899, Page 86). She is the great grandmother of all the Hussaini Syeds, being the mother of Hazrat Zainul Aabedin.

CHAPTER VII.

The quality of mercy is not strained;
It droppeth as the gentle rain from Heaven
Upon the place beneath; it is twice blessed;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.

—Shakespeare.

 himr dispatched one of his troopers to take the head of the noble Imam to Obaidullah the remorseless representative of Yazid. He rode with all speed, but arriving at Kufa, he found the gate of the castle closed, so he carried the gory head to his own house until morning, and told his wife, that he had brought her a priceless treasure of the world. She shrank from him with horror and said, "Other men bring presents of gold and silver, but you bring the head of the grand-son of the Prophet. By God the same bed will never hold us two any longer", and immediately leaping out of bed, she ran away charging him as one guilty of the greatest outrage to the illustrious family of the Prophet, and hence forward renounced all intercourse with him.

The next morning the man brought the head to Obaidullah who to the great horror of his courtiers treated it with contempt, even striking it on the mouth with his stick, and turning it over roughly with it. An old and respectable Arab* near by shocked at this impious behaviour said, "Alas, I swear by him besides whom there is no other God, that I have seen these very lips kissed by the blessed mouth of the Prophet." Obaidullah angrily replied, "If it were not for the fact that you are an old man and out of your wits, I should certainly kill you on the spot."

When news of this sad event reached Zainab, she was driven to utter despair. She put on a humble costume, and attended by some of her maids went, and sat down disconsolate at the threshold of the castle gate. Three times Obaidullah had to ask her identity before he was told it. No sooner did he know who she was than he said, "Praise be to God, Who has brought this proud woman to shame, wrought death upon her family,

* Zaid bin Arkam,

and proved her stories to be false." But she boldly retorted, "Praise be to God, Who has glorified our family with His Holy Apostle Mohammed (upon whom be peace), and has purified us. None but the wicked are brought to shame, and the lie is given to none but the evil one." He replied, "Can you not see how God has dealt with your family?" She answered, "They were destined to die, and they have gone to their resting place; but the Almighty God will bring both you and them together, and will judge you both." This put the Amir into a rage, but his friends, fearful lest he should be led to some act of violence, reminded him that she was a woman, and being unworthy of his anger he should not take any heed of her words. Obaidullah then said, "Enough, let her continue her maledictions. By the death of her brother, and the ruin of her rebellious family, God has given my soul full satisfaction." "True", replied Zainab, "you have indeed destroyed all our men and women and have destroyed us root and branch. If that be satisfaction, you have had it." Swearing that she was

a spirited woman, he added, "Thou art a proper descendant of Ali, who was a poet and a man of courage." "Courage, I know not", replied she, "for that is beyond the sphere of woman, but I speak according to the dictates of my heart." Then after ordering the woman to be sent to Yazid, the Amir cast his eyes on Ali, the son of Hussain, a youth just approaching the prime of life, and ordered him to be beheaded. Zainab's courage now broke down. Bursting into tears, she flung her arms around her nephew, and said to the Amir, "Hast thou not full well tasted the blood of our family? If thou must thirst for the blood of this innocent boy take mine as well, and let me die with him." The Amir looked at her again in great astonishment. Sinking in deep reflection his soul was assailed with doubt for he was in a mood to slay the boy. The young Ali entreated him for the sake of the near kinship that existed between him and the women, not to send them to Yazid without any one to attend them on their sad journey. The Amir paused a while, and looking now at Zainab,

now at Ali, thought of murdering the latter, but something in the look of Zainab, and her determination to die with the young nephew struck fear in his heart. At length he dismissed them and ordered Ali to be sent with Zainab to Yazid at Damascus.

Ali was chained, but still he bore himself proudly and refused to utter a single word to his custodians throughout the entire journey.

Hussain's head was first set up in Kufa afterwards paraded round the streets and then sent to Yazid at Damascus, along with the women and the young Ali, in charge of the relentless Shimr. "On their arrival at Damascus the grand daughters of the Prophet, in their tattered and travel-stained garments, seated themselves under the walls of Yazid's Place and wailed as only Arab woman can wail*"



* Syed Alir Ami's short history of the Saracens.

CHAPTER VIII

Thou that askest; "What is love"?

Seek thy king in heaven above.

L.—Tuttiett.

When Yazid saw that owing to all the injuries done by him to Hussain's family, there was no hope of reconciliation, he consulted his courtiers as to how he should dispose of them. One of them advised him to kill Ali and exterminate the whole stock of Hussain. Yazid pondered deeply over the suggestion. Another of a somewhat meeker nature said, "Oh Commander of the Faithful, do with them as the Prophet, their Patriarch would have done, if he had seen them in this condition." This moved him to compassion. Summoning the Syrian nobility he ordered Hussain's family to be brought before him. Seeing the sorry plight of the women he was shocked and gave vent to a curse on Obaidullah. Then he turned towards Ali and pointing to Hussain's—head said, "This was your father, who set my right at nought and tried to shatter my power, but God

hath disposed of him as you see." Whereupon the young Ali instantly repeated the following verse of the Koran. "No calamity befalls either the earth or your own person without being predicted in a book before creation.*" In holding converse with Zainab he spoke with disparagement of her father Ali and her brother Hussein, but the burning heart of this bold woman now became inflamed, and she replied with such noble scorn and just invective that he was shamed into silence. Yazid fearing some outburst in favour of Hussain's family ordered the ladies to be treated with proper respect. The women of Yazid's family came and kept them company and joined them in mourning for Hussain.

When Hussain's family resolved to leave for Medina, Yazid commanded No-aman son of Bashir, to provide them with all necessary provisions and safe escort under some trustworthy officer. As they were leaving he said to Ali, "Had your father fallen into my hands I would

* The Koran, Chapter 57, Verse 22.

have accepted any conditions proposed by him, and would have done whatsoever lay in my power to save him from death. But God hath decreed otherwise. Write to me, and whatsoever you desire, shall be done for you." Then the grief-stricken family set out for their deserted homes to shed their tears together with their kindred at Medina. They travelled by day and night, and the officer to whose care they were committed, behaved so respectfully throughout the journey that on their arrival at Medina, Umm Kulsoom said to her sister Zainab, "Sister, this Syrian has behaved so kindly to us that we ought to make him some present." "Alas," said Zainab, "We have nothing but our jewels to give him." Then said the girl, "Let us make him a present of them." With mutual consent they took up their bangles, and offering them to him earnestly begged him to accept them as a token of their respect and appreciation of his courtesy. But the worthy man refused to take them. "Had I acted merely for reward in this world," said he, "these jewels would have been more than su-

fficient; but that which I did was done for the love of God, and esteem for your relationship to the Prophet upon whom be peace."

When they reached Medina the grief of the whole family (of Hasham) was too great for words to express The whole city was in mourning. One of Hussain's cousins cited an ode reproaching the people for not protecting the family of Mohammed the Prophet. The following is a translation of this singular composition.

" Tell me, friends, what shall you say'
 On the awful Judgment-day ?
 When Mohammed asks you, 'where
 ' Are those trusted to your care ?
 ' Where his offspring-where his wives.
 ' Dearer than a thousand lives.'?
 Bound by many a festering chain
 Some in dungeons dark remain;
 On Kerbalas barren strand
 Others lie, a reeking band,
 Torn with wounds and stain'd with mud,
 Weltering in their own heart's blood.
 When before the Judgment-seat
 You the Holy Prophet meet,

He shall ask, if thus you show
 The gratitude you justly owe,
 For all the benefits bestow'd
 By whom whose bounty freely flow'd.*

“In a distant age, and climate,” says Gibbon “the tragic scene of the death of Hussain will awaken the sympathy of the coldest reader”.

It will now be easy to understand and perhaps sympathise with the frenzy of sorrow to which the Mahomedans give way on the anniversary of the massacre of Kerbala.**

Like his father Hussain was remarkable for piety. His biographers say that he paid his adorations to the Almighty a thousand times a day, and that during the 33 years of his life, had made five and twenty pilgrimages on foot to Mecca, whereas the devout Mahomedan need only visit it once during his life time. He once asked his father whether he loved him; Ali replied that he loved him most tenderly. Again he asked, “Dost thou love God?”

* W. C. Tailor's History of Mohamadanism, Page 207.

** Syed Amir Ali's History of the Saracens.

Ali answered in the affirmative. Then Hussain said, "Two true affections cannot exist at the same time in the heart. Ali was so moved by these words that he burst into a flood of tears. Hussain to comfort him continued, "If your choice were to lie between the sin of infidelity to God and my death, which would you sooner prefer? Ali replied, "I would sooner sacrifice my beloved son to death than abandon my faith". "Then", said Hussain, "by this test you have shown that your love for me is only a natural affection, whilst your love of God is the true love of your inmost soul,"



CHAPTER IX

It is the secret of sympathy,
The silver link, the silken tie,
Which heart to heart and mind to mind
In body and in soul can bind.

—Sir W. Scott.

In truth every Mahomedan ought to be concerned at the sad tragedy of Hussain's death (May God accept him), for not only was he one of the scions of the Prophet's family and one of the most learned men of the community, but also the son of the beloved daughter of the Prophet of God. Moreover he possessed splendid qualities, among which can be counted devotion, courage, and munificence. A magnificent monument marks the place where the remains of Hussain are interred, the place is named Mash-had-e-Hussain which means the place of Hussain's martyrdom.*

The butchery of Kerbala created a great thrill of horror throughout Islam, and gave birth to such national sentiment that the

* The head of Hussain the Martyr was kept in a Meshed at Ascalon up to 549 A. H. (1154 A. D.) when it was taken to Cairo. Syed Amir Ali's History of the Saracens, page 609, Foot note 11.

death of Hussain was severely avenged by the descendants of Abbass, the uncle of the Prophet.

The tragedy of Kerbala produce such an effect on the human mind that whoso ever happens to know of it cannot but help believing in the martyrdom of the noble Imam, and the consequent sanctification of the hero. This tragedy took place on the 10th of Moharrum in 61 A. H. and that black and bitter day has ever since been observed with the deepest grief, and most enthusiastic devotion by the Mosleme World.

Women and children of the noblest house on earth deceived deserted and tortured by thirst, a child's hand stretched forth for the blessings lopped off at the wrist, a babe shot in his father's arms; the noblest and bravest leader of Islam trusting to no other weapon but the justice of his cause betrayed and surrounded, his choice of death rather than dishonour, his lonely stand, his wounds, his death scene, his mutilation, all these miseries* (inflicted by his enemies) are such

* See "The Gujarat Mussalmans."

as would move even the hardest heart to compassion.

The Moharrum, the sacred season of grief, is observed every year. As soon as the new moon of the month of Moharrum is visible sacred ceremonies begin though preparations are made a little in advance. The solemnities last † 10 days during which sermons addressed in the most pathetic language are delivered to the audience. All Mahomedans are supposed to fast, live at peace with each other, give alms to the poor, and read the Koran during the period of mourning, but the ignorant change the mourning into masquerade. Some go about in bands gorgeously and fantastically dressed reciting the story of the Imam's sufferings and death. Others in fulfilment of their vow dress their children in green-like Faqirs, or make up as tigers or other animals,* and beg from house to house. Besides this, men and boys often band together and go about reciting the Moharrum dirge

† Including the Ziyarat it lasts till the 12th, but fasting is only observed for 10 days and is hence called Ashura from the Arabic word signifying ten.

* This is alleged to be in signification of the animals that kept watch over the body of Imam.

dressed as beggars. But this is a local custom peculiar only to India. Some people prepare Taziyahs or Taboots, bamboo and tinsel models of the shrine of the Imam at Kerbala. These Taziyahs are kept in the house for several days, and on the 9th day are brought out and carried in procession through the streets, incense is burnt before them, and other rites are performed. On the 10th day they are taken with much pomp and ceremony to some river or lake, and are sunk into the waters amidst prayers. Hindoos also in considerable numbers take part in the Moharrum, and in some places celebrate it independently. The Taziahs are peculiar to India and are not seen amongst the Persians and Arabians. Many Mahomedans regard them with strong disapproval; but in India the majority of them join hands in building them.* On this

* The making of Taziahs in India is said to date from the time of Amir Timur, (Timmerlane A. D. 1400) who on his return from a sacred visit to Kerbala built a miniature copy of Imam Hussain's tomb which he thought added to the mourning ceremonies of the Moharrum. It is by no means a religious function.—The Gujarat Mussal'mans.

occasion excitement becomes so acute that it often needs a strong detachment of military authority to prevent riot and bloodshed.

The unity of God, "There is only one and one God" teaches us this; "Oh Mosleme, thy Creator is one, there is no symptom of duality in Him, therefore be thou one with thy coreligionists. Do not dissent if thou consider Him one". The unity of true religion cannot tolerate antagonism to one another. Is this not sound and beneficent preaching? Why then should there be such dissensions for such trifles? Are not all Moslemes followers of the same Prophet.

Under a benign Government the greatest blessing to mankind is liberty, and peace is a great advantage to the free progress of religion. Let all who believe that there is one and only one God and Mohammed His Prophet, be they Sunnis or Shias, civilized or uncivilized, (as the members of one family in Islam), work directly or indirectly in the cause of religion. It is only the ignorant that raise the barrier to the free course of

universal brotherhood. Loose and uncontrolled living combined with evil influences generally precipitate some of them into evil courses; but regularity of work, discipline tempered with sympathy and encouragement would tend to wean them back to a clean and useful life. Can we, with distrust and hatred and contempt for our coreligionists, do good to ourselves, or religion or our community, so sorely in need of help and guidance in the dark paths in which we grope? Brotherly feeling and integrity of purpose should leave no stone unturned to uplift the ignorant and the illiterate to all uprightness, and enlightenment. It is the duty of the leaders of the community to organise a powerful campaign against the moral shallowness that runs throughout the lower strata of Mosleme society. The real strength and efficiency of a community lies, in fact, in its social character, in its moral rectitude, and its well-defined idea of good and evil. It is now time for the leaders to make an earnest, sincere, and combined effort to uplift the masses to moral and social spheres, bringing home to them

the beauty and charm of clean living so, as to draw their energies into more healthy channels.* With such liberal and public spirit let every Mosleme strive his utmost to raise the ignorant of his community to the condition of self-help, and integrity. Thus shall we fulfil the mission of charity to our fellow-beings, according to the precepts laid down to us by our great Teacher, on whom be all Honour and Praise on earth below, and fellowship with the Almighty above.

END

**Fountain of mercy, Whose pervading eye
Can look within and read what passes there,
Accept my thoughts for thanks, I have no words,
My soul, o'er fraught with gratitude, rejects
The aid of language-Lord, behold my heart!**

—Hannah More.



